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NONFARM YOUTH WORK ON FARMS

A Summary of Nine Evaluation Studies of the
1943 Victory Farm Volunteers Program

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Results

What the Farmers Thought of the VFV

What the VFV Thought

Their Age and Grade in School

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Extending Extension

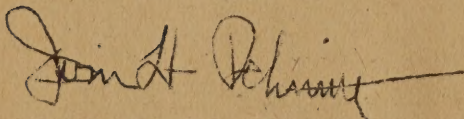
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Foreword

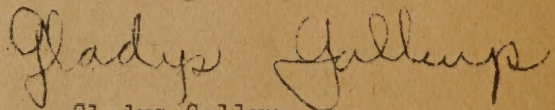
This circular is a summary of the results of nine evaluation studies of the Victory Farm Volunteers program for nonfarm youth in war-time agriculture. The Division of Field Studies and Training of the Extension Service and the U. S. Office of Education have cooperated in making these studies. They deal with farm work contribution of nonfarm youth and of the educational value to the youth. The detailed reports are given in the circular, *The Victory Farm Volunteers Do Good Work*.

The studies have brought out the following key points of a successful VFV program:

1. A good understanding of the program by the farmers, the young workers, and their parents is the chief key point.
2. Farmers accept the VFV for farm work when they are well prepared to receive the young inexperienced workers.
3. A clear understanding by the VFV of what they may expect on the farm reduces turn-over.
4. Farmers appreciate young workers who have had training which has familiarized them with a few common farm jobs.
5. Sizing up the situation in matching the VFV and the farm family results in successful placements.
6. Frequent supervisory visits to the farm after placement and supervision of groups in the fields iron out most difficulties.
7. The support of parents in a good VFV program facilitates recruitment, avoids difficulties, and increases the success of the work.



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DISTRIBUTION: A copy of this circular has been sent to each State extension director; State supervisor, Emergency Farm Labor; assistant State farm labor supervisor (Victory Farm Volunteers); assistant State farm labor supervisor, (Women's Land Army); State leader in county agricultural, home demonstration, and 4-H Club work; extension editor; agricultural-college library and experiment-station library

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The armed forces and war industries have drawn off much of the usual farm labor which farmers depended upon in the past. This has resulted in a critical shortage of farm labor. The Victory Farm Volunteers program is a part of Extension's farm labor program and is designed to tap the youth power of the towns and cities for farm work.

Factual Basis of this Report

This summary report is based on the results of nine studies of the VFV program in seven States. Three studies were made in Minnesota, New Jersey, and Vermont of the VFV "live in" program in which nonfarm youth went to the farms to live and work for the summer. Five studies were made in Louisiana, Maine, New Jersey, Oregon, and Pennsylvania of the VFV "day-haul" program in which nonfarm youth lived at home and were transported daily to the farms for work. One study was made in New Jersey of the VFV "camp" program at the Peddie School, where the nonfarm youth lived together at the school and were transported daily to the farms. In this report the "day haul" and "camp" results were included together.

The studies were made by personal interviews with 163 farmers and 398 youth. In some cases the parents of the boys and girls were also visited. Conferences were held with the supervisors in charge of the VFV program and with the school authorities.

What the Farmers Thought of the VFV

The general reaction of the farmers was that they were satisfied with the work the VFV did, that they liked them, and they wanted them again next year. There was but little difference in these respects between the attitude of the farmers who had "live in" youth and those who had "day haul" youth as shown in table 1.

The farmers would like to employ the same VFV again next year in order to have the advantage of their training and experience.

Most of the farmers employing "live in" youth felt they were not so good as usual hired men, because of their inexperience and lack of physical strength. However, they felt the youth were a satisfactory substitute in these times for the usual hired men and didn't know how they could have got along without the young folks. About one farmer out of six thought his VFV was equal to or better than the usual help.

The attitude of the farmers employing "day haul" youth was somewhat different. They were much better pleased with the VFV. One-half of the farmers felt the young folks were equal to or better than the usual hired help.

There are probably two reasons for this difference. First, the inexperienced "live in" youth were expected to learn and to do a variety of general farm jobs necessary in running a farm. They were not hired by the day to do one or two specific jobs. The "day haul" boys and girls lived at home and went out by the day to pick beans or dig potatoes or pick fruit or harvest vegetables. They had one or two definite jobs to learn and to do.

Table 1. - Farmers' attitude toward the VFV

Farmers' attitude	Percentage of farmers		
	VFV	VFV	
	Live-ins	Day-Haul	Total
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Farmers who -			
Liked the VFV.....	96	91	93
Thought they did good work.....	84	85	85
Wanted same youth again next year..	81	84	82
Farmers who thought VFV were -			
Better than usual hired help.....	4	16	9
Equal to usual hired help.....	13	34	23
Not so good as, but still good enough.....	70	45	58
Much worse than usual hired help..	13	5	10
Farmers who want some VFV again next year.....	95	96	95

In the second place, it was customary practice for farmers to hire nonfarm youth to work by the day and to do these specific jobs. Even in peacetime many farmers depended on youth. Hence, their comparison of the VFV was with the youth they were accustomed to hiring heretofore. It was not unusual for these youth to be younger children who had always been available for some work in the summer. It was this same age group that the farmers called upon this past year.

On the other hand, it is unusual for farmers to hire city boys and girls to do the work of experienced hired men, who know their way around on a farm. It was quite difficult for inexperienced boys and girls to become reasonably skillful in many necessary farm jobs in the brief period of a summer.

Nevertheless, nearly all of the farmers, 95 percent, said they wanted some Victory Farm Volunteers again next year if the farm labor shortage continues, as they think it will.

What the VFV Thought

The VFV were satisfied with their summer's experience in farm work as indicated in table 2. They were satisfied with the hours of work even though the "live ins" worked long hours as shown in table 4. The "live in" youth learned to realize that a farmer's day was long in the summer. As a part of the farm family they usually got up in the morning when the family did and went to bed at night when they did or before. They learned that there were days when the work was very light because of the weather conditions and that there were other days that they had to "make hay while the sun shines."

Table 2. - VFVs' attitude toward summer's work

VFVs' attitude	Percentage of VFV		
	VFV	VFV	
	Live-ins	Day-Haul	Totals
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
VFV satisfied with -			
Summer's experience.....	92	97	96
Hours.....	96	98	97
Wages.....	86	94	92
Other working conditions.....	95	98	97
Living conditions.....	97	-	-
Recreation.....	89	-	-
Instruction by farmer.....	95	-	-
Transportation.....	-	96	-
Supervision.....	-	96	-
VFV wanting to do farm work again			
next summer.....	91	98	96
Reasons for doing farm work this			
summer:			
War service.....	42	75	67
Earn money.....	39	83	72
Physical benefits.....	50	23	30
Farm work experience.....	89	52	60

The "day hauls" were better satisfied with their wages than the "live in" VFV. The "day haul" VFV received a higher rate of pay than the "live ins." The "day haul" youth lived at home, and the farmer did not furnish room and board which was considered in the rate of pay of the "live ins." The main reason the "live in" VFV were not so well satisfied with their wages as were the "day hauls" was the long hours of work per day.

And yet, 96 percent of the VFV said they want to do farm work again next year on the same farm or on another farm. Some of the youth who were not satisfied with the wages and hours relationship felt that a change of farms would help the situation. Some farmers expect more of the youth than other farmers.

Much care had been exercised in selecting the farms on which the VFV were placed. It was important to consider the farmer's understanding, and that of his wife, of city boys and girls who wanted to do farm work. The patience they would show had to be appraised, as well as the home conveniences to which city youth are accustomed. Although there were many adaptations the youth had to make, nevertheless by the end of the summer 97 percent of them were satisfied with the living conditions.

Four out of five farmers had had at least an eight-grade education. Most of the farm homes had modern conveniences such as electricity, telephone, radio, newspaper, and a car, as shown in table 3. They had magazines, but in many cases not the kind the youth were accustomed to. The VFV bought their own magazines.

Table 3. - Characteristics of the Farm Homes of VFV Live-ins.

(1)	Percentage of VFV Live-ins
Farm homes having -	(2)
Electricity.....	75
Telephone.....	70
Radio.....	91
Newspaper.....	86
Car.....	98

The reasons for doing farm work last summer were somewhat different for the two groups of VFV. About 9 out of 10 of the "live in" group went to the farm to work largely because they wanted farm work experience. They were interested in farm work and wanted to "get out into the country". Only 5 out of 10 of the "day haul" group mentioned farm work experience as a reason for doing farm work.

Physical benefits rated higher among the "live in" group than among the "day haul" group. War service and money earned were higher among the "day haul" group. The reason that money earned was mentioned so frequently by the "day haul" group was the higher cash wages they received. When asked what they did with their money they said they bought war bonds, school clothes, saved some, and used part for spending money. Some bought things they had been wanting for a long time, such as a watch.

How Long the VFV Worked

The Victory Farm Volunteers made a sizable contribution to farm work. The "live ins" worked an average of about 10 weeks, the "day hauls" worked about 7 weeks, as indicated in table 4.

The "live ins" put in an 11-hour day; the "day hauls" less, 8.3 hours. On the average the highest wages the "live ins" received per month was \$34.90 plus room and board. The "day hauls" were paid by the hour.

Table 4. - Work and Wages of the VFV

	Average for VFV		
	VFV	VFV	
	Live-ins	Day-haul	Total
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Hours worked per day.....	11.0	8.3	9.0
Highest wages received per month.....	\$34.90	-	-
Highest wages received per day.....	-	\$3.61	-
Number of days of farm work.....	71.2	42.2	50.4

The average highest amount they received per day was \$3.61. They lived at home and were transported to the farms daily.

Their Age and Grade in School

City and town jobs attracted many nonfarm 16 and 17-year-old boys who otherwise would have been available for farm work. In many instances nonfarm boys had expressed an interest in farm work but by the time farm jobs were available the youth were already working in town. This made the recruiting problem more difficult.

All the youth interviewed, who went to the farm to live and work for the summer, were from 14 to 17 years-old inclusive, as indicated in table 5.

Table 5. - Characteristics of the VFV

		Percentage of VFV		
		VFV	VFV	
		Live-ins	Day-haul	Total
(1)		(2)	(3)	(4)
Age of VFV:				
	16 and above.....	43	16	26
	14 to 15.....	57	50	52
	Below 14.....			
Grade completed in school:				
	12 and above.....	4	1	2
	10 and 11.....	58	21	31
	9.....	21	23	23
	7 and 8.....	17	33	28
	6 and below.....	0	22	16

The type of work expected of the youth in relationship to their ages and strength, as well as the fact they were going away from home to live with strangers, were factors which made it seem unwise to have younger boys as "live ins"

The "day haul" situation was somewhat different. In years past it was customary for younger children to work on the farms by the day picking beans and doing other similar work. This custom was continued, resulting in about one-third of "day-haul" youth interviewed being under 14. The difference between this year and previous years was the great emphasis placed on supervision, safe methods of transportation, good working conditions, and fair treatment. Farmers have begun to realize that good supervision is not only beneficial for the youth but pays for itself.

Most of the "live in" VFV were in the senior high school, although over a third were in the junior high school. Most of the "day haul" VFV were in junior high school or below and about one-fifth in the senior high school. This indicates that training programs are needed in junior as well as senior high schools for the preparation of the youth in understanding their contributions in providing food and for working on farms.

What the VFV Learned

The Victory Farm Volunteers program is first and foremost a program for utilizing youth power resources in producing and harvesting much-needed food. In addition, the program was a valuable educational experience. These young people did a variety of jobs that were new to them. They had the benefit of training. They lived with strangers. They worked together with other young folks. They had the advantage of good supervision.

Ninety-seven percent of the "live in" group and 63 percent of the "day haul" group learned new skills or improved old ones. The boys and girls who went out by the day had less opportunity for a large variety of farm work and less chance to learn new skills. Furthermore, to many, their work was not new to them. They had worked on those jobs in previous summers.

Table 6. - Educational experience for the VFF

	Percentage of VFF		
	VFF	VFF	
(1)	Live-ins	Day-haul	Total
	(2)	(3)	(4)
VFF who thought they had -			
Learned to adjust to new situa-			
tions.....	95	-	-
Obtained a better understanding			
of farmers' life.....	96	-	-
Learned new skills.....	97	63	73

Nearly all of the young folks who went to the farms to live and work said they had learned to adjust to the new situations and had obtained a better understanding of the farmer's life, table 6. Acquainting city folks with the problems of the farm is a significant educational experience.

There were some outstanding cases of the development of good work habits. Many youth mentioned good work habits, "learned to work steady," as something important they got out of the summer's work. Some said they valued the new friendships made. Others said it was good for them; it kept them out of trouble in town.

In Salem, Ore., the juvenile officer was very much in favor of young boys and girls working on farms. He pointed out that when they were constructively occupied they had no time for delinquent acts. His records showed that when the boys and girls were not occupied, the juvenile complaints coming to his office were five or six a day, but during the summer when the boys and girls were doing VFF work, he got only one or two complaints a week. Other counties reported similar experiences.

Extending Extension

Through the VFF program farm families have been reached who have never participated previously in extension. In these studies families who had never before taken part in extension programs constituted 11 percent of those employing nonfarm boys and girls to live and work on the farm. Successful contacts of this sort form a basis for extending the values of extension teaching to farm people.

